

DMAP ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

3/21/2014 – Boston School Forest, Plover

Introductions:

Bob Nack who is the committee chair and DMAP coordinator for the DNR provided a welcome for the morning and facilitated introductions. Membership from agencies and organizations in attendance included: DNR Wildlife Biologists, US Forest Service, National Wild Turkey Federation, Safari Club International, Wisconsin Bow Hunters Association, DNR Area Supervisor, Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association, Wisconsin Bear Hunters Association, Pheasants Forever, Wisconsin Conservation Congress, DNR Bureau of Science Services, DNR Forester, Wisconsin Consulting Foresters, Whitetails Unlimited, Ruffed Grouse Society and Aldo Leopold Foundation. Membership organizations not in attendance included: Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, Wisconsin County Forest Association, Quality Deer Management Association and Wisconsin Wildlife Federation. Two members from the Conservation Congress who sat on the original DMAP action team committee during the Deer Trustee Report process were in attendance as guests. Jeff Walters, an IT Project Manager for the DNR also attended as a guest to provide a presentation updating the development of the DMAP database. These are public meetings so anyone who wants to attend and engage in the discussion is welcome.

Public land enrollment in DMAP: Bob Nack explained that during the Deer Trustee Report process the DMAP action team framed out what the program will look like and included a public land component. The following discussion was meant to provide more of a definition to what this will look like.

- DMAP is not going to be an exclusive private landowner situation. All hunters and citizens in the state should benefit.
- We could make a list of ways we can use it and then work out details based on that.
- The program could improve deer hunting opportunities on public land. We want it to be a positive experience for people who are out there.
- There could be difficulties with public perception if public lands are enrolled in DMAP and receive more localized antlerless harvest especially in areas with low county antlerless quotas.
- An initial thought on how DMAP could be used on public land could be the promotion of forest regeneration.
- A lot of the public properties we are discussing also have a master plan that would include a great deal of public input.
- As state properties go through a master planning effort they're basically looking at feedback from the public on what they want to see and what they want the forest to look like. Could we integrate what desirable deer numbers on the property would look like?
- We'll need to try and be efficient as possible and be sensitive to staff time.
- It is clear that there is emphasized value on forest products and agricultural crops but have we ever put a value on a deer that is realistic in the eyes of a hunter and other wildlife enthusiasts? Before we set deer quotas on public lands we need to decide what the value of the animal is that were taking off.
- We need to take into consideration the viewpoints from all of the organizations who have valuable input on public lands.

- Is there anything addressed in the DMAP rule regarding lands that are acquired under stewardship grants and are open for public use?
- Could a cooperative be formed for a public property where partners could dedicate funding similar to the “friends group”? What you run into is the freedom of people who hunt on public land. To put your perspectives on public land when other people hunt there affects personal choice in pulling the trigger.
- Friends group of DMAP cooperative of public lands. General thoughts – Friends groups burn out and wear off so we’d need a way to reengage people.
- Be careful on terms such as “overharvest” and questions like “how can deer hunting opportunities be improved?” There are many perspectives on what a quality hunt is.
- Right now people have immediately been identifying DMAP as “more deer more often and big antlers” etc. The principal message is, DMAP in some places may mean less deer and in other places mean more deer. If we can educate people on facts such as “less deer may mean bigger bucks” it would be better received.
- ***State-owned lands***
 - From the perspective of county wildlife biologists, it is going to depend on what type of land it is. Lands owned by counties should go through the regular enrollment process but state-owned lands should go through a different process. Enrollment of state lands should be more complex.
 - What would be a reason for state land to get into DMAP? Hunters who are hunting on specific public property may want to enroll the property to have some input regarding what goes on regarding management.
 - State-owned land is going to be difficult because of significant hunting pressure.
 - It may be advantageous because those lands are managed by the same people looking at deer quotas and making recommendations to the county Advisory Committees.
 - Application for DMAP tags for state lands would have to be on a limited basis.
 - Whatever goals are it would be difficult to maintain that on state lands or dictate what can be harvested on those lands.
- ***Tribal involvement:***
 - Need to ensure the tribes are included because they hunt on many public lands.
 - Northern and southern Wisconsin will be completely different along with the Ceded territory.
- ***National Forest perspective:***
 - Whether it’s to harvest more, less or the same amount of deer, the National Forest is trying to balance numerous visions of what it needs to be.
 - The forest has a management plan but it doesn’t mean there aren’t opportunities to think about other species such as deer. Questions such as: “Where? When? How much? And how often?” on the habitat side could be asked.
 - There is room to think about DMAP but the other issue is dollars. For every dollar of timber they cut almost all of it goes to the United States treasury.
 - If the National Forest was issued a number of tags, they’re an inefficient place to get them filled. The licensing process should come back through the ALIS system which would make things easier.

- The forest has a stocking requirement, so whatever harvest is done they have to assure a restock to a certain level. This effort involves going through and doing an accounting of how browsed a stand is.
 - Many foresters out there are also hunters but there are tradeoffs. In the past, when deer numbers got very high, deer were forced to live in the hardwoods and did a great deal of damage.
 - What would the response be to the statement that the National Forest isn't cutting enough timber? Timber harvest is one piece of the equation and it's not a one-to-one relationship although timber output has been very high since October 1st.
 - What we're going to actually wind up working toward in the end is this balance. We must have a sustainable supply of deer that actually allows regeneration.
 - They want deer and deer hunters on the National Forest but it can't be what it was in the 2000s where you can't grow anything.
- ***Forest regeneration on public lands***
 - Tagline for DMAP is "a partnership for healthy deer and healthy habitat" and you get that by having a balance.
 - The hunter and habitat must agree. If you believe there are too many deer you can turn this around in one year by just putting out more tags. This is a better situation for managing that public land and preventing a problem.
 - There has got to be an improvement in what hunters see without going over the line but until you tell us what that line is there can't even be that conversation. It's taken a lot of education to get to the point to understand that there's got to be a common ground.
 - The management of forested lands is really influenced by DNR forestry staff. We'll need to make sure coordination is close with Foresters and Wildlife Biologists when making recommendations
 - We may need to start out at the county committee level by telling them how many acres of county forests they have and how there needs to be some level of browse management.
 - It would be good if we could use DMAP as a way to address high deer densities on public property. Foresters are struggling with regeneration on many public lands.
 - On properties that are struggling to have forest regeneration, do you enroll that in DMAP or do you just tell people where the deer are to increase harvest, or could you do both?
 - Where we fail from the hunting side of this is most wouldn't know what browse looks like other than when you see a bud taken off.
 - Working with advanced regeneration, the problem is when trees aren't allowed to grow it impacts what you are able to do in terms of your harvest situation. If you can't maintain stocking on MFL lands you have to remove the deer and/or do other tactics to help with browse issues or enrollment in the program may be lost.
 - If you continually overbrowse a habitat you're going to deteriorate that habitat for not only forestry but for deer. Overbrowsing reduces the carrying capacity and thus reduces the ability of that land to carry deer in the future.

- Certain tree species can respond very vigorously when you take deer off, but others can take a very long time. They can persist but they're not going to thrive. These are the things we want to educate landowners on.
- Foresters are different because they look ahead way into the future and not just in now. Although they might not understand it, most hunters want the same thing but they don't know how to quantify it.

Management plans and Managed Forest Law

- If you ask the DNR county foresters how many enrollees will follow MFL plans they'll answer by saying probably a small percentage.
- Some wildlife staff will not be very experienced with reading MFL plans and may need to interact with foresters but we must have some of the initial work done in order to have time to get everything done.
- From a wildlife habitat perspective the timber management recommendations made by foresters wouldn't be changed. This is the biggest area in MFL and the 20% "non-productive habitat" may be tailored for those that want to do something with deer.
- The plan itself for MFL is a 25 or 50 year plan and DMAP plans will be much shorter.
- We don't want to limit our outreach to people who already have MFL and are engaged.
- Very few people are dropping out of MFL and DMAP would stimulate landowners who are not in MFL to get into it. Both the forestry and wildlife portions of an MFL plan would benefit from DMAP.
- On many enrolled lands the forestry portion of MFL plans needs adjustment. The cookie cutter approach that is taken will miss out on opportunities in many situations. However, it is unclear how much flexibility there is to adjust that.
- How much flexibility is there in the mandatory and non-mandatory parts of the plan? Often times we see people trying to take a mandatory and turn it into a non-mandatory.
- Have the MFL program evolve and actually work with partners to prepare those plans.
- The Department of Forestry is okay with the idea of one cooperator per county for the first year. They also have eight hours assigned to reaching the unengaged and will be able to tailor their time and effort to what's available to them in that given area.
- Right now DMAP wouldn't cover the cost of having a private forester write a plan.
- What kind of plan are cooperators going to get? Staff is not going to write a plan for every landowner in a cooperative.
- There's going to be a lot of interest from people enrolled in MFL. MFL landowners get a very detailed management plan for their forest and included in that is a management plan for wildlife (not as detailed). Part of the framework for DMAP is to provide a management plan. We don't want to duplicate efforts and be repetitive of existing MFL plans but should look at ways to work together.
- MFL plans are written using a program called WISFRS. In discussions early on, it would be great if DMAP could run with WISFRS but as it turns out there's a lot of work that goes into WISFRS so it would become a lot of work and money to do that.
- DMAP plan would include deer harvest recommendations not included in an MFL plan.
- MFL enrollee would contact state forester. State forester may or may not do a site visit and then bring in cooperative foresters that will actually write the plan.

- Forester and biologist are going to show up at the property for the site visit. If the landowner wants to get MFL, an MFL forester will write the site plan but DMAP biologist would provide wildlife management recommendations.
- The MFL plan is a general plan, maybe the DMAP plan should be more general but when the practice (such as harvest) is scheduled that may be time to work out the specific details with DMAP. Staff time is sensitive so this may not work.
- Do we have an option to leave MFL landowners out of being eligible for DMAP?
- Mechanics in the MFL plan are there but there needs some manipulation to get it for wildlife. It is not complicated to make minor adjustments once the plans been in place or approved. It would be taking the objectives from an MFL plan and expanding on them which is a legitimate way to go.
- ***Forest stewardship plans:***
 - How will we treat DMAP landowners that don't want to enroll in MFL? For those that don't, but still want to produce a plan that has value there is an option for a forest stewardship plan which is basically a step down from MFL plan.
 - Who is going to write that forest stewardship plan? The foresters are the best ones and wildlife staff will focus on the DMAP plan.
 - What if they don't want a stewardship plan? Don't we want to emphasize good sound forestry stewardship? Maybe landowners don't realize the good things they could be doing.
- ***Staffing requirements:***
 - If the program gets big and Biologists have a high number of cooperators per county there shouldn't immediately be that one-on-one assistance. Most of the work can be done up front.
 - Biologists and Foresters could come up with a basic DMAP plan, but if people want levels above that may need to hand it off to consultants. Other states have said they get phone calls from the same landowner almost weekly because they want constant attention.
 - Excitement is good but other projects can't be put on the backburner.
 - There has already been a discussion with administration about staffing. There are state resources available but there are also NGOs that can help with cost-sharing or partnership biologists which is how the MFL program is handled.
 - We must have some limitations as to how involved the state is in DMAP. The wildlife program has been poor in doing that. Took on DMAP prior to identifying the work force to do it. There must be an undertaking to say "here what the staff can do, here is what they actually do, and here is what should get focused on in the future".
 - Workshops are an option. They are a way to instruct many people at one time.

DMAP graphic: Bob provided options developed with the intention of becoming an "identity" or graphic image designed to idealize DMAP. **The committee voted to revise and move forward with a specific design that will be unveiled at a later date.**

DMAP database/enrollment: Jeff Walters has been working on an online database for interested parties to enroll in DMAP and manage collected data once accepted. The intent was to keep it simple for both enrollees and staff while collecting and sharing essential information.

Entered data could provide useful information for enrollees and the state, and included at workshops and meetings.

- What do we want to call this database? **The committee voted to call the DMAP database “My DMAP”**
- Database timeline: Open enrollment for DMAP is starting at the end of April for one month. We’ll need to recruit people to help test things prior to rolling it out. This would help us look at real world examples of enrollment.
- The people testing the database in mid-April would actually be enrolling. Given what we looked at today there are not a lot of changes to be made. As it is now, by April 15th we can make that available.
- Thinking about the development of this database in phases. Phase one: application, phase two: data collected by field staff, phase three: cooperator data entry.
- When are we starting to look at press releases to start advertising on the ground? Would local biologists put out a local press release or would we do one statewide?
- There needs to be an identity of the page that people will go to and enroll. However, it will be technically oriented because we must confine to requirements from the state.
- It must be regulated by an email address in order to identify who people are and whether they have enrolled in this system yet.
- Ideally we want a page for when people log on there’s an account. If it’s a cooperative we want to see the people who are included within it.
- Although we would like this database to correspond with the forestry database WISFRS, it will be difficult because they are different.
- Within this database we have defined an “individual property” as a stand-alone property that may have multiple landowners. A “cooperative” is defined as a group of properties with different landowners that may or may not be adjoining.
- Will we be able to use the data to track when a cooperative is formed and how long they have been active? Yes we will be able to track those dates in this system.
- This will be a living document so as the DNR makes changes landowners will see them.
- Although enrollees will be asked to specify their town range section not everyone is going to know how to do that. We could just ask them to specify some type of location on it, but is customer service prepared to start taking calls on how to provide legal descriptions? Most of our property taxes actually have a town range section on them. Could enrollees instead put a GPS location as a primary point on their lands?
- Is the MFL plan and DMAP plan going to have a description? Any potential to have an application where they could find their property and click on it? Looking for the extent of the property? Problem is if its multiple sections and they only give you latitude/longitude?
- Can this database tell us which landowners have MFL plans associated with a particular DMAP cooperative or property? Biologists will be able to see that MFL plan inside the system but it will not necessarily be available to landowners.
- Could the primary person in a cooperative identify who is enrolled in MFL in their group or would they have to know that up front? Couldn’t instructions be integrated into enrollment so they’re prepared to provide their MFL number? The reason for doing is to allow local biologists to look at MFL plans easily.

- Need DOB in combination to validate that you're customer ID is correct. When you come in you will see a customer ID with DOB to make sure that it exists in the customer service system.
- Who would be approving the application? The county biologist and DMAP coordinator would get notification that an application has come and the biologist would most likely be the one approving it.
- If people do not get approved for the first year on a tier two or three basis could they get approved for tier one? Yes.
- When people initially enroll they will check which tier they want to be considered for, however if they don't get accepted at that tier won't they have to change their status in the system? If not accepted tier two or three applicants are automatically enrolled in tier one, how will we know its tier one if it hadn't been changed in the system? We could have the date submitted and date they're enrolled into two or three?
- For those not accepted for tier two or three, we must find every way possible for them to be elevated there next year.
- If there's a landowner that enrolls different parcels in different counties will they have to make separate applications? Yes.
- Can enrollees obtain a customer ID without purchasing a product? All one would need is a name and a date of birth.
- What criteria should we use to determine who is in and out for this first year? It might be a good idea to not immediately accept anybody that was leasing land. Already formed cooperatives with large acreage should be favored. This would provide an opportunity to get more contacts.
- For the rest of the state where they're not as engaged, the local biologist may know one or two good landowners to call and suggest DMAP.
- We don't want to make people feel bad if they don't immediately get tier two and three enrollment but we don't want to turn people away either.
- It may be beneficial to include disclaimer language on application that resources are limited during this first year and an application does not guarantee approval etc.
- When they enroll in the system they'll need to see some resources and links that might start to help them. Some of it is specifically emailed to them. Would/could the people who enroll be automatically added to the GOV delivery list? The people that are actually enrolling should be automatically enrolled to the list. It may be better to redirect them to the page where they can opt in to subscribe to GOV delivery because a lot of people may not want to be automatically enrolled in GOV delivery.
- Can the local biologist access information on a website for who has applied in their area? That is the idea although it has not been developed yet.
- ***Leased properties:***
 - A large portion of deer hunting public are not landowners, they are hunting leases. How is this going to work for them? On the formal approval there needs to be the signature of the landowner. We were going to take the stance that it was largely responsible of the landowner and the leasers to work out what things are.
 - Is there going to be a signed contact at some point? In some way you need validation that the landowner is on board.

- We must provide something for landowners such as an affidavit that states “yes I agree to have the land I own enrolled”. That will be addressed in the very near future.
- **Tag allocation:**
 - There will be a primary person representing a cooperative. Tags will be issued to this person's account and it will be up to them to distribute the antlerless tags.
 - These issues need to work well with our current ALIS system, but in a few years when there is a new system, everything will work toward this.
 - After fees are paid and people are enrolled they can go to any vendor and purchase available tags.
 - Law Enforcement will have access to DMAP system in order to track the validity of DMAP tags and those that wish to fill them.
 - Is there anything in the administrative rules that prevent the sale of the tags? They are reduced-price antlerless tags that are not hunter specific.
 - Are DMAP tags going to be in addition to the tags allocated to that county? Right now they're not going to be counted in toward the county quotas and will be similar to agricultural damage tags.
 - Will the tag have a property ID and not a customer ID on it? Correct
- **DMAP deer registration:**
 - Will the primary DMAP cooperative member have to register all deer killed on the tags they were allocated? There has to be a number that says “this is the DMAP cooperator” How do we link a registered DMAP tag to the deer or the primary cooperative person? The tag will not be specific to any person just specific to primary contact and will be good for anybody to use. They must be on the property.
- **Enrollment questions:** Jeff gave a snapshot of the type of questions that will be asked during the enrollment process.
 - If we ask a few more questions we might have more criteria to gauge where we want to take this and have enrollment this first year. We should be more interested in folks that take more time to complete the application fully.
 - Reasons for enrolling? Reason is going to be active for the forming of a cooperative. It provides an idea of the direction that landowners will go in.
 - Acres? In terms of fees and their eligibility for tier two or three. This information can also be used to validate with map and town range section.
 - What level are you interested in enrolling in?
 - Is the land owned or leased? It could be both in cooperatives
 - Is the land private or publicly owned?
 - Is this property enrolled in wildlife damage program? That could give biologists some idea of deer densities in the area
 - Past 5 years on average: How many deer are harvested on the property each year? When they do the site visit with the forester they'll see if it's more perception and what they'll use to gauge the prescriptions. A

comment was made that most people can't remember five years so maybe three years would be more realistic.

- Land cover: Of the enrolled acreage, what does it encompass?
- This will likely be an interactive dialogue.
- What we're asking isn't that burdensome. The application would maybe take 15 minutes tops
- Any time we make anything mandatory people ask questions. Let's just get them in the door and know what we're dealing with.
- Why don't we have an initial short form application that has just the necessary information and there could be additional optional information they can add if they'd like. That way they would know what is mandatory and what is non-mandatory.
- Could we add "are you already actively managing your land for wildlife?" with the assistance of programs such as CRP/FOODPLOTS/EQUIP etc. to the application? This would enable biologists/foresters to be more prepared for the site visit.

Timeline:

- During the last meeting we discussed having an enrollment period during this first year of April 21 – May 31st for tier two and three applicants. However, we would like people to be able to enroll in tier one year round.
- Enrollment selections should be made in June and a site-visit and management plan should be completed in July and August.
- Cooperators should have antlerless tags in their hands by September 1st.
- We will most likely do things differently next year but it is important to have something in place and set up for this year.
- During the regional deer summit meetings in June we'll be able to discuss which applications will be accepted for this year with staff.
- We should have the second deer cycle already planned out so we can put applications right out or have open enrollment with a cutoff date for that season. December 10th is the cutoff for a lot of license purchases.

Public comment:

- The DTR action teams were charged by the governor to simplify and we're going to have to simplify with DMAP.
- Landowners will want to get involved and feel productive with their land management.
- We shouldn't completely push it toward forestry because it is about the hunter too.
- From a DMAP enrollment standpoint, will industrial forest be the same as MFL open? Would they enter as public land or private land?
- There is a three year enrollment period and in a lot of instances, leased properties only have one year lease so you would almost have to go with the owner.
- As we get experience with DMAP and cooperatives catch on, we can work with them to build more cooperatives and get enrollees to higher levels.
- Originally in the DMAP action team process it was outlined that properties within cooperatives didn't necessarily have to be adjoining.

DMAP outreach:

- A committee member discussed DMAP with landowners and found that large landowners seemed to have deer issues and were interested in the program. They want to impact something large and DMAP may be a good place to start.
- There is a magazine produced by the Wisconsin Buck and Bear Club which includes stories and harvest statistics by county. DMAP is very pertinent this year and a committee member is responsible for the content so we can place a DMAP advertisement in it if we'd like.
- We should get an article in the Wisconsin Outdoor News.
- It's not a bad idea for committee members to do outreach along with the department and tell the story of DMAP. This is a partnership so if you like what you're hearing, telling good stories is not going to hurt anything.
- There is a hunter magazine that goes out statewide to SCI members and the presidents have a column that can go in the next issue. A promotional advertisement or something similar could go in there.
- Whitetails Unlimited approved to put DMAP brochures out at banquets. When fall rolls around there will be plenty of opportunities to reach groups that are almost 100 percent deer hunters.

Cooperator data collection: Bob provided to committee members a summary of biological data that was collected on DMAP harvested deer in some other states. He explained that what we decide to ask from cooperators should be in line with the application and database.

- We need to collect lymph nodes. Perhaps the local biologist could sync up with the landowner to facilitate this.
- We will need to collect data that will be beneficial to both the department and to the landowner.
- One of the reasons people will get into the program and stay involved is to have this data. DMAP Biologists in other states generate tables and graphs for landowner and they really appreciate and benefit from it.
- Maybe we should consider asking the DMAP participants over time "we're gathering this now but what else would you like to see?"
- Data collection relative to habitat is really important not only from the standpoint of the herd but also to make sure the landowner carries out objectives on land management.

Next meeting:

Further discussion on management plans and data collection needs from landowners will be a top priority. The meeting is scheduled for Monday April 21st at the Mead Wildlife Area.